CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (currently amended): A process for preparing an α-aminonitrile with enhanced optical purity which process comprises

contacting a mixture of the enantiomers of a chiral ~~N-formyl~~ α-aminonitrile with an acylase selective for one of the enantiomers,

wherein said mixture is in the N-formyl form so that ~~whereby~~ one of the enantiomers of the said ~~N-formyl-~~α-aminonitrile is selectively deformylated to obtain ~~into~~ the unprotected corresponding unprotected α-aminonitrile; or

wherein said mixture is in the unprotected form and a formylating agent is provided so that one of the enantiomers is selectively converted to the corresponding N-formyl α-aminonitrile.

2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended): The process of claim 1 ~~claim 2~~ wherein the formylating agent is formic acid, a formic acid amide or a formic acid ester.

4. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the acylase is a peptide deformylase having a bivalent metal ion cofactor from group 5-11 of the periodic system.

5. (currently amended): The process of claim 1, wherein the peptide deformylase is of ~~chosen from~~ the class EC 3.5.2.27 or EC 3.5.1.31.

6. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, wherein the peptide deformylase contains the sequences (I) HEXXH, (ii) EGCLS and (iii) GXGXAAXQ.

7. (previously presented): The process of claim 4, wherein the peptide deformylase is from *Escherichia coli.*

8. (previously presented): The process of claim 4, wherein the bivalent metal is Fe, Ni, Mn or Co.

9. (previously presented): The process of claim 8, wherein the bivalent metal is Ni.

10. (previously presented): The process of claim 1, which further comprises adding a stabilisation agent.

11. (previously presented): The process of claim 10 wherein the stabilisation agent is catalase.

12. (previously presented): The process of claim 10 wherein the bivalent metal is Fe.

13-21 (canceled)